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FEDERICO GONZALEZ SUAREZ

By MARSHALL H. SAVILLE

Federico Gonzalez Suarez, Archbishop of Quito, Ecuador, died at the age of seventy-three, on December 1, 1917. Doctor Gonzalez Suarez was unquestionably the foremost native South American historian, and his History of Ecuador will always stand as a fountain of information, and a model of careful and judicious research. The late Archbishop was born in Quito, April 13, 1844. His mother was a native of Quito, and his father, who died when the son was quite young, was a Colombian. At an early age the youth decided to enter the church, and when twenty-one he became a member of the Order of Jesuits. He taught literature, philosophy, and the humanities, successively in the Jesuit colleges of Quito, Guayaquil, and Cuenca. He left the Jesuit Order in 1872, and became attached to the church at Cuenca as Secretary of the Curacy. In his early youth Gonzalez Suarez gave evidence of his literary ability, and he soon became a prolific writer on matters pertaining to the church. After his retirement from the Jesuit Order the opportunity for labors in historical research came to him, and the first essay, an archaeological one, was begun while he resided in Cuenca. In 1853 in the little village of Chordeleg in Southern Ecuador, some ancient tombs were found containing a great treasure of gold and other objects. The site was visited twenty years later by the priest, who gathered data for his important *Estudio Historico Sobre Los Cañaris*, published in 1878. Although the bulk of his later literary work was more largely historical, his predilection was towards the problems of archaeology. As one of his fellow countrymen has written,

in the midst of the most arduous episcopal work he turned from time to time with love to his favorite study, and a little before his death was still bringing together the fruit of his latest lectures and studies, in the form of advice to the youth who were following in his footsteps.

In 1881 he completed and published a single volume of an ecclesiastical history of Ecuador. The mass of material which he had gathered in the preparation of this work caused him to suspend the completion of the history on the lines begun, and to undertake the preparation of a broader and more comprehensive history of his native land. In the furtherance of this task he went to Europe in 1884 where he remained for nearly three years, working in the archives and libraries of Spain and Portugal. In these studies he examined more than two hundred documents in the library of the Royal Academy of History in Madrid, and more than one thousand bundles of manuscripts in the Archives of the Indies in Seville. Of these manuscripts he made copies with his own hand of all of those which related to the subject under investigation. On his return to Ecuador he at once began his history, although still engaged in church work, and from the years 1887 until 1903 was engaged in its publication. This monumental work was issued in seven volumes, comprising about three thousand pages, and volume one was printed in 1890. Besides the purely historical matter it included an archaeological atlas and text not numbered in the series. With the completion of the seventh volume, which takes the narrative down to the year 1809, a period just before the time of the independence of Ecuador, the author abandoned the completion of the work, due in part to increasing clerical duties, and also to failing health. In 1895, he became Bishop of Ibarra, and in 1906 he was consecrated Archbishop of Quito. While living in Ibarra he wrote his treatise on the Aborigines of Imbabura and Carchi, and after becoming Archbishop he found time to continue his archaeological studies. As has been said he continued to take an active interest in this branch until his death.

The writer became acquainted with the Archbishop in 1906, and owes much to his kindly interest and advice, in the prosecution of his archaeological researches undertaken at that time through the financial coöperation of Mr. George G. Heye. A man of quiet and courteous manners, with the mien and face of a scholar, it was always a great pleasure and privilege to be received by the Archbishop in his simple and austere study. The impression given was

that of meeting a friend and fellow student. With an accurate reading knowledge of the leading languages, he was a painstaking student of the studies issued in the English tongue. His history was written without the least bias as a prelate. He searched for the truth, and on the occasion of the appearance of the fourth volume of his history in 1893, in which he had treated at length of the delinquencies of certain of the fathers of one of the orders in Quito, based on evidence found by him in some documents in Spain, a storm of protest was raised by some of the more bigoted members of the Ecuadorian clergy. Among these was the German-born Bishop of Manabi. The justice of his fearless attitude in the search for historical truth was recognized by the Pope, as evidenced by his appointment as Bishop of Ibarra two years later. The merits of this great and impartial history are appreciated in Spain and Latin America, but it is not as well known in this country as it deserves. Dr. Gonzalez Suarez was the father of Ecuadorian archaeology, and as a prose writer and poet he ranks high among the Spanish American writers of the nineteenth century. We do not hesitate to place his history as a product of Latin-American genius and acumen, with the history of the Mexican, Orozco y Berra, who was one of the most gifted historians of either North or South America. In the death of the distinguished Archbishop, Ecuador has lost one of her greatest sons, and Latin America one of her most brilliant men of letters.

The following partial bibliography inadequately represents the literary labors of Dr. Gonzalez Suarez. It includes only those titles which are in the library of the writer.

1878. *Estudio Sobre Los Cañaris, Antiguos Habitantes de la Provincia del Azuay en la Republica del Ecuador.* viii, 55 pp., 5 plates. Quito, 1878.
1881. *Historia Eclesiastica del Ecuador desde los Tiempos de la Conquista hasta Nuestros Dias.* Tomo primero 1520-1600. 12 unnumbered, xxxvii, 412 pp. Quito, 1881. This is the only volume published.
- 1890-
1903. *Historia General de la Republica del Ecuador.* Nine volumes. Volume I, xvi, 319 pp., Introduction, and Ecuador in Pre-Spanish times. Archaeological Atlas: Text, xvi, 210 pp. Plates, xxiv. Volume II, viii,

- 480 pp., *Discovery and Conquest 1530-1564*. Volumes III to VII, *The Colony, Ecuador under the Government of the Kings of Spain, 1564-1809*. The entire work comprises about three thousand pages.
1901. *Recuerdos de Viaje ó Cartas acerca de Roma, España, Lourdes y Colombia*. xii, 203 pp. Frigburgo de Brisgovia, 1901. Second edition.
1903. *Los Aborígenes de Imbabura y del Carchi*. 71 pp. Author's edition of twenty-five copies reprinted from the *Anales de la Universidad Central de Quito*, Numbers 118-129. Quito, 1902-1903.
1904. *Prehistoria Ecuatoriana Ligeras Reflexiones sobre las Razas Indígenas que Poblaban Antiguamente el Territorio Actual de la República del Ecuador*. vi, 87 pp., 5 plates. Quito, 1904. The appendix contains several vocabularies and texts of the native languages of Ecuador. On plate III are illustrated a number of the gold objects known as the "treasure of Sigsig" now in the Museum of the American Indian (Heye Foundation).
1906. *Memoria Histórica sobre Mutis y la Expedición Botánica de Bogotá en el Siglo Decimo Octavo (1782-1808)*. xxxii, 129 pp. Quito, 1906. A first edition was published in 1888.
1907. *Un Opusculo Inédito de Don Francisco José de Caldas*. xvii, 25 pp., 3 maps. Quito, 1907.
1910. *Los Aborígenes de Imbabura y del Carchi*. Text, xiv, 145 pp. Atlas in long folio of xxxxi colored plates. This is a rewritten and extended second edition of the work published in 1903. The number of copies of the Atlas, published for the first time, was limited to fifty.
1910. *Disquisición Crítica*, in the *Biografía de Don Pedro Vicente Maldonado* by Antonio C. Pérez, pp. 59-60 of the same. Quito, 1910.

MUSEUM OF THE AMERICAN INDIAN, HEYE FOUNDATION,
NEW YORK.